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CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

Date: January 22, 2014

To: Chair Cole and members of the Natural Resources Board

From: Rob Bohmann, WCC Chair

Subject: Emergency Board Order WM-24-13(E) adoption request: related to deer management, hunting, and implementation of the 2012 White-tailed Deer Trustee's Report

From the beginning, the Congress has worked with Dr. Kroll and his team, Dr.'s Guynn and Alt, on their task of reviewing Wisconsin's deer management program. The leadership of the Congress met with Dr. Kroll and his team on numerous occasions and many of our delegates assisted in facilitating the six town hall meetings that were held throughout the state.

Dr. Kroll and his team did an outstanding job of involving the citizens of the state and listening to their concerns. We were honored that Dr.'s Kroll, Guynn, and Alt specifically noted as a recommendation that the Conservation Congress must have a more active role in deer management at the local level, and we have been ready to take on that challenge. We are prepared to work with the Department of Natural Resources to implement the recommendations in the Deer Trustee Report (DTR).

Quite a few of our delegates were involved with the DTR implementation process that began last March. Some attended as Congress representatives, while others attended simply as concerned citizens, dedicated to conservation. There were a total of 62 specific recommendations for modifying the future of deer management in Wisconsin. The Action Teams were to review each of the DTR's recommendations and assist in developing specific actions that were needed to enact each one.

In August of 2012, the Congress took a position in support of the Deer Trustee Report, in its entirety. The Congress continues to maintain that position of support of the DTR, but we do not have a position on the specific DTR rule package (as a whole) that is before you today. Tom Hauge and Kurt Thiede discussed this rule package with the Congress' Executive Council at our meeting in Wausau on January 10th, 2014, and council members did have some questions and concerns regarding this rule package.

Who appoints the members of the Deer Management Advisory Committees in each county, and is it possible that the congress delegation in each county facilitate these committees? Some counties have multiple municipalities, some that may not allow hunting of any sort. Will they have a seat on these committees? Furthermore, what is the actual role of these county committees, they are advisory, but to whom? It's also unclear as to how these county committees will interact with the public.

There was a concern about the bonus buck as well. Under this proposal, a person may potentially harvest three antlered deer while only harvesting one antler-less deer. The bonus buck should be an incentive to reduce the deer herd by harvesting additional antler-less deer. The ability to harvest 3 antlered deer to one antlerless deer will not achieve any type of herd reduction.

Do we have to include a free antlerless tag with all license purchases? Or, can we issue just a buck tag at time of purchase and make all antlerless tags available in August when the former bonus tags would go on sale?

Regarding the restoration of a statewide restriction on the harvest of white/albino deer; the Deer Trustee Report never mentioned anything about the harvest of white/albino deer. This is an entirely separate issue and should not be a part of this rule package. If anything, the harvest or prohibition of the harvest of white/albino deer should be a county option and not imposed state or region wide.

There were also some concerns raised about automated deer registration. However, this was a recommendation in the DTR, and the Congress position continues to be in support of the DTR. The Congress will be asking an advisory question at the 2014 Spring Hearings regarding this issue to compile additional citizen input.

The Congress supports consolidating the number of DMUs using county boundaries as DMU boundaries. We support the switch of DMU population goals from a specific overwinter population goal of deer per square mile to an objective of increase, stabilize or decrease. We support the fee increase for antlerless tags in the former CWD and Herd Control areas along with the separation of antlerless tags for public versus private land. We support the creation of a DMAP program.

While we do not currently have a position on the proposed standard season structure in this rule package or the proposed season dates for 2014, the Congress' Deer & Elk Committee will be meeting March 22 and I'm sure the Department will be presenting both of these items to the committee at that time.